

## Rony, Tanzim shine on pacers' day

SPORTS REPORTER

The pacers dominated the proceedings in the ninth round of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) with Mohammedan Sporting Club's Abu Hider Rony claiming a seven-wicket haul and Abahani's Tanzim Hasan Sakib claiming a fiver in separate matches yesterday.

Rony ran through the Gazi Tyres Cricket Academy batting line-up, claiming 7-20 -- the third best figures in a List A game for a Bangladeshi and his personal best -- to bundle them out for a mere 40 runs in 12 overs at BKSP Ground 3 in Savar.

Mohammedan completed the chase in just 6.2 overs -- the fastest chase in Bangladesh's List A cricket -- with nine wickets in hand, with skipper Imrul Kayes and Mahidul Islam Ankon unbeaten on 19 and five respectively.

At the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah, Abahani pace trio of Tanzim, Shoriful Islam and Taskin Ahmed collectively claimed 10 wickets to skittle out Legends of Rugganj for 99 in 28.3 overs.

Sakib was the most successful of the trio, claiming 5-23 while Shoriful and Taskin took three and two wickets respectively.

In reply, Abahani reached 101-2 in just 10.1 overs with Mosaddek Hossain hitting a quickfire 18-ball 48 and



On a day when pacers accounted for 24 of 38 wickets scalped in the Dhaka Premier League yesterday, opener Saif Hassan notched his eighth List A ton as his 120-ball 115 helped Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club to a 73-run win against Tamim Iqbal-led Prime Bank at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

- It took Mohammedan only 12 overs to bundle out Gazi Tyres at BKSP-3 yesterday, making it the shortest innings in List A cricket in Bangladesh.
- Mohammedan pacer Abu Hider Rony's seven for 20 in six overs in the third-best bowling figure by a Bangladeshi bowler in List A cricket.
- Gazi Tyres' 40 all-out is the third-lowest total in List A cricket in Bangladesh.

## Focus shifts to T20 WC preparations

SPORTS REPORTER

With the ICC Twenty20 World Cup just two months away, the Bangladesh players will now shift their focus on the forthcoming mega event in the West Indies and the USA, leaving the questions raised about their Test credential following the recent thumping at the hands of Sri Lanka at home unanswered.

The Tigers lost the two-Test series against Sri Lanka 2-0, where their batters showed little to no resolve against the Lankan attack.

After the defeat, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque pointed fingers at the country's domestic first class cricket, which according to them was not preparing players for the challenges of Test cricket.

However, with the T20 World Cup set to begin in June, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has no choice but to focus on the shortest format.

However, BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus assured that the fiasco in the Test series won't get swept under the rug.

"We will not forget what has happened in the Test series. We will look to arrange red-ball cricket in the June-July window. The A team will play red-ball cricket against New Zealand and Pakistan at home before touring Pakistan," Jalal told The Daily Star yesterday.

The ongoing Dhaka Premier League (DPL) and the upcoming five-match T20s against Zimbabwe at home offer the Tigers the chance to get themselves up and running before they travel to the USA for a

three-match T20I series against the hosts.

The BCB won't be staging a training camp for the Tigers owing to a time crunch as they hope that the nine T20s -- eight internationals and a World Cup practice match -- will give the team enough preparation leading up to their World Cup opener against Sri Lanka on June 8 in Texas, USA.

"We will have a total of nine matches to prepare ourselves for the World Cup. There is little time for practice camps and believe that these matches will suffice in terms of preparing ourselves," said Jalal.

The league-stage of the DPL will resume on April 15 after the Eid holidays and will run till April 19. The Super League stage is likely to begin on April 22 and Zimbabwe are set to arrive on April 28. The Bangladesh coaching staff is set to return to the country in the third week of April after which the squad for the Zimbabwe series will be announced.

Amongst the expected faces in the squad, opener Soumya Sarker remains a doubt as the 31-year-old has been on the sidelines since suffering a knee injury in the third ODI against the Lankans last month.

"Soumya will not feature in the DPL. We can hope that he will return at some point in the Zimbabwe series," a member of BCB's medical team told The Daily Star yesterday.

Most of the players in the 30-member pool who have applied for a visa for the World Cup, which also includes Soumya, are taking part in the DPL.

Bangladesh skipper Shanto and pacer Shoriful Islam -- who was rested in the second Test against the Lankans -- played for reigning champions Abahani yesterday.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed, who had opted out of Tests due to workload management ahead of the World Cup, has played five 50-over matches for the Sky Blues.

Out-of-form batter Liton Das played one match for Abahani after being dropped from the ODI squad but has told the side that he will join after Eid. Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club's star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who took leave to perform Umrah Hajj, will do the same.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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BCB Cricket Operations chairman

Anamul Haque remaining unbeaten on 37 off 34 balls. Meanwhile, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club completed a 72-run win over Prime Bank Cricket Club.

Sheikh Jamal opener Saif Hassan hit the lone century of the day -- 115 off 120 balls -- while Shykat Ali (43) and Fazle Hasan Rabbi (42) made handy contributions as they posted 292-6 in their 50 overs.

Prime Bank, in reply, got bundled out for 219 in 44.1 overs, with left arm spinner Tipu Sultan claiming 4-53. Prime Bank skipper Tamim Iqbal top-scored with 69 off 70 balls, in an innings where he got dropped on three, 27 and 67 and also survived a run-out chance.

## Mariners exact revenge on Usha

SPORTS REPORTER

Holders Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club began their Super Six phase of Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League with a 5-3 win over Usha Kriya Chakra at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday, avenging the 5-1 defeat in the league opener.

Usha, however, lodged a complaint to the league committee after the match, informing their opponents had fielded six players from services' teams instead of allotted five, violating the league's bylaws.

"Usha filed the complaint in a non-systematic manner, so we responded to them, but we're looking into the matter because Mariners have four matches left," said league committee secretary Khaza Abu Taher Latif Munna, adding that the player against whom Usha filed the complaint was a free agent when he signed with Mariners.

In the game, Mariners went 3-0 up at one stage before Usha struck twice to reduce the margin in the third quarter. The defending champions, however, negated any possibility of a comeback as Usha's Indian recruit Ishrat Ikhtidar's hat-trick goal ended up being a consolation one.

Mariners raised their points total to 25 from 11 matches, seven fewer than leaders Mohammedan Sporting Club, who won 6-3 over Bangladesh Police in the day's other match.



Kevin De Bruyne on Saturday brought up his century of goals for Manchester City by scoring twice in a 4-2 win at Crystal Palace that moved the defending champions level on points, at 70 after 31 games, with Premier League leaders Liverpool, who played a game less. The Belgian midfielder also set top-scorer Erling Haaland up in a game that saw City concede after just three minutes at Selhurst Park.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Muzaffarov, Jafar rewrite script in same week

SPORTS REPORTER

Uzbek midfielder Muzaffar Muzaffarov produced a stunning goal under pressure as title contenders Mohammedan Sporting Club earned a 3-1 victory against Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture in Dhaka yesterday.

With six wins in 11 matches, Mohammedan remained in the title race on 23 points -- five behind leaders Bashundhara Kings -- while Sheikh Russel stayed in seventh place.

Mohammedan, interestingly, arrived in the match after securing a semifinal spot in the Federation Cup with a 2-1 victory against the same opponents on Tuesday, courtesy of goals from Muzaffarov and super-sub Jafar Iqbal.

The first half of the contested affair at Bashundhara Kings Arena ended 1-1, with Sheikh Russel coach Jugoslav Trenchovski sent off. The Black and Whites took the lead in the 37th minute through striker Souleymane Diabate converting a penalty kick before Sheikh Russel's Serbian forward Vajislav Balabanovic equalised at the stroke of interval in similar fashion.

Sheikh Russel also saw their new-signing Guinean forward Sekou Sylla receiving marching order in the 80th minute, but it was an insult to injury as the setback was followed by Mohammedan striking twice in the span of six minutes, putting the game to bed.

Muzaffarov hit a screamer to the top corner from 35 yards in the 72nd minute. Jafar then joined the party with a tap-in, doing full justice to Diabate's superb low cross.

In the day's other match, Sheikh Jamal rallied from behind to draw 2-2 with Bangladesh Police, and the results kept the two -- who would face off in the Federation Cup quarterfinal -- in fourth and fifth places, respectively.

## Liverpool must cause problems for United: Klopp

AFP, Liverpool

Jürgen Klopp said title-chasing Liverpool must cause "problems" for Manchester United on Sunday as they seek to cut out the mistakes they made at Old Trafford in last month's dramatic FA Cup defeat.

The Reds, currently two points clear of Arsenal at the top of the table after beating Sheffield United on Thursday, lost a thrilling quarterfinal at the home of their fierce rivals 4-3 in the final moments of extra time.

Klopp has won just twice and drawn four in 10 visits to the home of United, who are sixth in the table after a dispiriting 4-3 defeat at Chelsea.

United's victory in the FA Cup quarterfinal in March ended Liverpool's bid for a trophy quadruple -- the only defeat for Klopp's side in their past 12 matches.

"We were really good that day but we didn't finish the situations off," said the Liverpool manager.

- Manchester United have faced more shots than any other side in Europe's top five leagues in 2024 (225). Meanwhile, Liverpool have attempted the most with 255 shots to their name.
- If Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scores today, he will become the first visiting player to score on four successive trips to Old Trafford. The Egyptian netted a total of five goals in his last three away league games against Manchester United.
- Manchester United's 4-3 loss to Chelsea at Stamford Bridge last Thursday was their 12th defeat in the league -- the most they have suffered in a single campaign, also losing 12 times in the 2013-14 and 2021-22 seasons.

The German added: "Football is not that easy so we have to find a way to cause United problems. They (United) will try exactly the same.

"Against this opponent, in this stadium, we better play a really good football game to be honest if we want something from it."

Klopp was asked whether Liverpool needed to be perfect in their final eight Premier League games, with defending champions

City just a point behind Arsenal in a three-way title race.

"Most of the time it is a tight race and it looks like a tight race," he said. "If it's a tight race then the best place you can be in is in it and we are in it so that's cool, that's good.

"Let's keep fighting. Obviously, the next one is a big one like they all are... it's a tough one, good opponents, but we are ready and we want to be in that fight."